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did not come out badly as a defender of Albanian interests, for the lands in jeopardy in the south constitute nearly a quarter of the entire territory of Albania and are much more important to the country's existence than the territory claimed from Jugoslavia. Recently, with Communist fortunes at a low ebb in Greece and with Jugoslav-Albanian relations as bad as possible, the situation has been reversed. Hoxha can still claim, however, that a Communist victory all around is the only guarantee of a safe solution of the quarrel with Greece, and he also is now free to attack the treatment received by the Albanians in Kossovo and to say that if only there were a "true" Communist régime in Belgrade it would do them favors which a "false" comrade like Tito refused.

Basically, however, Hoxha felt insecure, and not only for the reasons mentioned a few paragraphs back. He must constantly have wondered how he himself stood in the Kremlin. What was the Soviet estimate of his own fidelity? He had been Tito's friend, had protested countless times how much he loved him, how he would fight to the death for him. What could he do to demonstrate that he, Hoxha, who had gone back so easily on one ally, would remain faithful to the next?

Hoxha's second-in-command was Lieutenant General Koci Xoxe (pronounced Dzodze), Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior, organizing secretary of the Communist Party, an able theoretician and adept also at ruthless action. Like Hoxha he had been Tito's close collaborator, but he had not hesitated a fraction of a second longer than his chief in announcing his switch to the anti-Tito camp, and he vied with Hoxha in denouncing their old ally's ideological errors and political perfidy and in lauding Stalin as the fount of Communist wisdom and the Soviet Union as Albania's only protector. During the summer of 1948 as Minister of the Interior he conducted the purge of Titoist suspects in the government and Party.

What more convincing proof of his own fidelity could Hoxha offer Stalin than to be willing to sacrifice even this outstanding friend and colleague? To denounce Xoxe would be almost like denouncing himself, but preferable. He called the Central Committee of the Party to meet in Berat in September, and after it had listened to his account of how Xoxe, who had been purging Titoists, was himself a

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665 661 Titoist, it voted that this was indeed so and that he in turn should be purged. Also implicated were Pandi Christo, former President of the Control Commission, Nosti Kerentyi, former President of the State Planning Commission, both like Xoxe members of the Politburo, and more than a dozen other influential officials and party members. As a first step, Xoxe was removed from his key post and nominated as Minister of Industry. Moscow-chosen and Moscow-trained Major-General Mehmet Shehu helped Hoxha direct this manœuvre and succeeded Xoxe as the Number 2 man of the régime. Xoxe's new post was announced by the Albanian radio October 2, 1948. Before the month was up he had been deprived of it, expelled from the Party and arrested with Christo and the others as "agents of Trotskyite Jugoslav agents." He was convicted as "chief bandit" of "the Trotskyite group of enemies of the people," [5] and shot on June 11, 1949.

Hoxha may have had other motives besides a desire to offer Stalin the most dramatic burnt-offering possible as proof of his own zeal and fidelity. He may have seized on the chance to get rid of his nearest rival. Nor must we rule out the possibility that Communists sometimes act for the reasons they allege. Hoxha may have told the truth about Xoxe. The Minister of the Interior may have purged a few minor Titoists in order to cover up the fact that he had left more important ones at large, and that with them he was plotting to take Albania into the anti-Cominform camp at the first opportunity.

000 A writer in the *New Times* of Moscow has given us a summary of Soviet opinion of Xoxe:

> Koci Xoxe was a shifty little man who combined the brutality of a wolf with the cowardice of a jackal. He wormed his way into the Ministry of the Interior and the Central Committee of the Party. He flooded the country with sleuths of Tito, helped the latter to organize the economic invasion of Albania, violated the foreign trade monopoly and the sovereign rights of the Republic. Tito speculators made their way into the country and plundered Albania's commodity reserves, buying up with devaluated dinars cattle, grain, olive oil, fruit, wool, wine, tobacco, as well as valuable handicraft ware, the work of Albanian peasants. The goods were shipped by truck and boat to Jugoslavia, and

[5] Tirana radio, home service transmission, June 10, 1949.

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conference, it will be remembered, condemned both the Protestant Ecumenical Movement and the Vatican, "center of Fascism and of plots against the Slavic peoples."

The fact that the Primate, Archbishop Christopher Kissi, did not attend any of these assemblies was strongly indicative of a lack of appreciation for Communist conceptions of the role and functions of the Church. Indeed, it would have been strange if he had attended. The Orthodox Church, like all other religious bodies in Albania, had suffered from the Land Reform Law promulgated during August, 1945, which gave the Party the right to confiscate and nationalize property it has claimed elsewhere. By the close of 1948, Moslem and Orthodox ecclesiastics were completely dependent financially on the state. During the next year, the Archbishop was deposed and arrested. The government's published contention was that he "had worked against our interests and the interests of the people by collaborating with the Unitarian Church during the period of Fascist occupation." Two other prelates, Bishop Ireneo and Bishop Agathangjeli, were arrested. How many other members of the clergy have been taken into custody, deported to labor camps, or executed, no one knows. There is a report that Bishop Irenaeus Banushi was put to death during 1947.

However, the full fury of Hoxha's enmity fell upon the Roman Catholic Church. The Germans had withdrawn in November, 1944. A month later the government seized all printing establishments, and the Catholic press was abolished. At the same time a number of ecclesiastical offices were searched, and some members of the clergy were taken into custody. Religious youth organizations were banned, and only the Anti-fascist Youth Front, avowedly pro-Communist, was permitted to function. In February, 1945, the first "People's Court" to convene in Scutari sentenced one of the best known Al-

795 banian writers, the Reverend Lazarus Shanjoha, to death. He
661 had favored close ties of friendship with Italy for many years, and so the sentence was ascribed to the National Liberation Front's fanatical detestation of all things Italian, and not to antireligious prejudice.

659 Ilya Ehrenburg, major Soviet propagandist, visited Al-
668 bania during the November of 1945. Upon his return to Mos-
687 cow he described Scutari, more than half the population of which was Roman Catholic, as a vicious hotbed of reaction. At the time of his visit the city was preparing for its first post-war elections. A handful of students at the diocesan seminary for the training of priests circulated mimeographed sheets urging that the recipients vote against the National Front. These sheets bore the signature of the "Albanian Union." Spurred on by Ehrenburg's denunciation, the government jailed and tortured some of the distributors. They revealed the names of the seminarians, who as a matter of fact constituted the complete membership of the Albanian Union. A spectacular trial of those held guilty of having plotted to overthrow the State with the help of "Anglo-American imperialists" became in reality a forum before which the Catholic Church was indicted for high treason. The Rector of the seminary and one of his fellow Jesuits were accused of responsibility for the conspiracy, found guilty, and executed. Others received heavy prison sentences. Nowhere else had a court acted more grimly.

659 The liquidation of virtually all Catholic activities followed
798 swiftly, with more cruel and vengeful treatment of the clergy
661 than has been witnessed even in Hungary and Yugoslavia. The Papal Nuncio was expelled, as were all priests and religious born in Italy. Education was reserved to the State, even nursery schools being taken from the Church. Catholic Action was suppressed. The seminaries were closed. Ecclesias-

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tical property was deeded over to "the people," and the priests who were permitted to remain in office were restricted to one room in their rectories. The only Catholic bishop who is thought to have survived lives in an isolated mountain village. By the close of 1948, virtually every widely respected and well educated priest had been executed or imprisoned. Francis Gjini, Bishop, Abbot, and Albanian representative of the Papal Nuncio; George Volaj, Bishop of Sappa; Matthias Prennushi, Provincial of the Franciscans—all were put to death. Vincent Prennushi, Archbishop of Durazzo, died in prison.

Under this reign of terror, the Catholic population of approximately 100,000 was reduced to dire poverty, impotence, and silence. The laity suffered almost as grievously as the clergy. Catholics holding positions of public trust were ousted. Priests were forbidden to minister to the sick in hospitals or prisons. To consort in any way with a priest meant probable imprisonment or worse. By the middle of August, 1951, Catholics who still ventured to practice their religion openly were served by not more than sixty-two priests. On the third day of that month, the government published a decree concerning the status of the Roman Catholic Church. This document, having announced that the Church no longer "has any kind of organizational, economic, or political ties with the Pope," went on to ordain that the clergy must accompany religious teaching with the inculcation of sentiments of loyalty to the "people's power of the Albanian People's Republic," and that appointments to ecclesiastical positions must have the approval of the government. This decree was approved at a convention of Catholics meeting in Scutari in 1951. At the same time the government announced that Catholicism in Albania had repudiated all forms of allegiance to the Papacy, "enemy of the people."

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659 The legal status of religious establishments was clarified
671 by a law dated November 26, 1949. The principal stipulations were these:

All clergymen or lay officials must be approved by the State; and any who act illegally "must be dismissed from their posts immediately."

Any communication addressed to the public by a Church official—speech, message, or pastoral letter—must be submitted in advance for censorship.

The education of youth is conducted by the State, and "religious institutions have nothing to do with it."

Religious orders were not to assume management of any hospital or other charitable institution, or to possess real property.

795 Measures taken against the Catholic minority were so bru-
● 661 tal that even Communist functionaries protested. At a Congress of the People's Party, held on March 31, 1952, General Hoxha sternly upbraided Tuk Jakova, one of the principal Communist Party leaders, for questioning the wisdom of the persecution. Hoxha's words, as reprinted, read in part:

> Comrade Tuk Jakova, disassociating himself from the political program of the Party and of the State in so far as religion and in particular the Catholic clergy are concerned, has not evinced the right attitude toward this clergy or acted against it vigorously. Not seeing the very grave danger which is present in the reactionary clergy, Comrade Jakova has not hated them in an adequate way.

It would therefore appear that while Mohammedanism has been spared the full rigors of the antireligious crusade in Albania, the Christian Churches have suffered as perhaps nowhere else in satellite Europe. Bereft of leadership and of education, depleted through violent death, deportation to labor camps, and escape to other countries, they have been reduced to a status almost as primitive as that of the Churches

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in the Soviet Union itself prior to the War against Hitler. They are almost wholly isolated. Information concerning the cultural life of the Albanian people is limited to what can be obtained from broadcasts over the government radio station.

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Hoxha did not join forces with Marshal Tito when that leader broke with the Kremlin, but was soon made aware that Albania was wholly isolated and that his Yugoslav neighbor gave asylum to dissidents who plotted a *coup d'état*. That such an undertaking might well meet with success seems probable. But Italy retains its interest in the strategic and economic advantages of the Albanian area, and its assent would be required; and currently, with the struggle for Trieste in the foreground, no entente is conceivable. The Russians apparently maintain a small body of troops in the vicinity of Tirana, but have in no other wise manifested great concern. Apparently they consider Hoxha a negligible problem child. It is apparent, however, that the Russian garrison makes impossible any attempt to overthrow the dictatorship from within the country.

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The fate of the three erstwhile Baltic Republics—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—illustrates the sad truth that in troubled and imperialistic parts of the world it does not pay to be a small nation. Each of the three had a solid folk or tribal core round which language, mores, and religious tradition had developed. For brief periods each managed to acquire a precarious independence. But they lay along the great Baltic seacoast route from Western Europe. German colonization efforts, spearheaded by the Teutonic Knights, went this way, and later came solidly entrenched land barons. There were periods of Swedish and Polish domination. Finally, as a result of the Treaty of Nystad, which in 1721 ended the Swedish